

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
 OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

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Investigation of:

MV ETHAN ALLEN,
 LAKE GEORGE, NEW YORK,
 OCTOBER 2, 2005

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* Docket No.: DCA 06 MM 001

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Interview of: JOHN ROOT

Fort William Henry Resort and
 Conference Center
 Lake George, NY

Thursday,
 October 6, 2005

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to
 notice, at 3:05 p.m.

BEFORE: MORGAN TURRELL

APPEARANCES:

MORGAN TURRELL
National Transportation Safety Board

MAURICE ALDRICH
Warren County Sheriff's Office

SGT. WALTER SCHEDEL
New York State Park Police

SEAN QUIRK
Shoreline Cruises

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I N T E R V I E W

(3:05 p.m.)

MR. TURRELL: Good afternoon. It's 3:05 on October 6th. We're at the Fort William Henry Conference Center. We're doing an interview with Mr. John Root, who is a witness of the accident of the Ethan Allen on October 2nd. My name is Morgan Turrell, NTSB.

And to my right?

MR. ALDRICH: Investigator Mo Aldrich with Warren County Sheriff's.

SGT. SCHEDEL: Sergeant Walt Schedel, New York State Park Police.

MR. QUIRK: Sean Quirk with Shoreline -- Shoreline Cruises.

MR. ROOT: John Root, J-o-h-n R-o-o-t.

INTERVIEW OF JOHN ROOT

BY MR. TURRELL:

Q. Okay, Mr. Root, what city and state do you live in?

A. Lake George Village, New York.

Q. Okay. And, John, what do you do for a living?

What's your occupation?

A. My wife and I run a motel.

Q. And do you have any other affiliations in the city?

A. I am a trustee on the Village Board.

Q. And do you know the, the Quirk family?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. You also familiar with the operators of the Mohican?

3 A. Yes. Steamboat Company in --

4 Q. Lake George Steamboat. Okay. And how long have you
5 lived in this area, John?

6 A. Oh, I grew up in Bolton Landing, so 48 years.

7 Q. Okay. And you're pretty familiar with the lake?

8 A. Pretty familiar, yes.

9 Q. Do you -- are you also a boater?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Do you own a boat or --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. What kind of boat do you own?

14 A. A 22-foot (indiscernible).

15 Q. What type of boat is that exactly?

16 A. It's -- cabin.

17 Q. Cabin. How often do you go out on the lake?

18 A. Not as often as I would like to tell you the truth,
19 but on average maybe three times a month during the
20 (indiscernible) season. Maybe more on the ((indiscernible)
21 season, but during the course of the -- when the motel is open,
22 it's not that easy.

23 Q. Okay, sure. I'll just go ahead and ask you, on
24 October 2nd, which was Sunday, if you can describe what you may
25 have seen in regards to the Ethan Allen accident, in your own

1 words?

2 A. When do you want me to start, and how far do you want
3 me to go?

4 Q. Well, first of all, where were you on Sunday?

5 A. If you, if you look at the Bay like, like a clock,
6 the accident scene being at 12 o'clock. This is
7 (indiscernible) where I keep our boat is at 6 o'clock.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Triage center drop-off point would have been 9
10 o'clock.

11 Q. If you'll just point out -- here.

12 A. Actually about right -- well --

13 Q. Sure. This is --

14 A. Yeah, yeah, so I don't want to mark up your map.
15 It's right in the center. It's where -- the accident site was
16 straight out, and like I said, we dropped the people off her.
17 The accident was here. So this would be 6, 9, 12.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. That's what I'm thing to --

20 Q. Sure. So --

21 A. Have you been out to the Bay?

22 Q. Not yet.

23 A. My sister's house is one with the stack stone
24 terraces. It's right at the end of Cultavic (ph.) Road.
25 Stacked stone.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. It's not hard to see.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. So it -- as we walk, it's going to be steps coming
5 down so you get an elevated view, and there was nothing out of
6 the ordinary on my way down to the boat.

7 Q. Okay. So let's, let's start back say at 2 o'clock in
8 the afternoon. Where were you at?

9 A. Let's see, 2 o'clock. Probably at the motel. We had
10 friends over. We tried to get out act together to go out in
11 the boat. We went over, picked up another family and --

12 Q. By, by car or by boat?

13 A. By car.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. We went over in our car, picked up a friend of ours,
16 woman, and their three kids, went back to our motel and to --
17 to get seats and things to take out on the boat and we headed
18 over to my sister's before (indiscernible) the boat to go out.

19 Q. And your sister's place is where you, where you
20 indicated here on the, on the map here?

21 A. There's a -- I don't think it shows it on here.

22 (Indiscernible).

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Which is (indiscernible). Right there at the end
2 of -- just past Hearthstone, first right past Hearthstone on
3 the right-hand side.

4 Q. Okay. Okay. So what time was this? What time did
5 you actually leave on the boat?

6 A. Got in the boat, took the cover off, started the
7 boat, hadn't been out in probably -- since September 12th. So
8 little hard starting it, but got it started. Little hard, took
9 it three cranks where it normally just takes one. The kids
10 were putting their life preservers on. We were putting a
11 cooler in the boat, and you know we were trying, trying to get
12 things organized, had the bilge running, and I looked out and
13 then I saw the Ethan Allen upside down. Took awhile to
14 comprehend what it was. Just a green thing upside down in the
15 water. I -- first, my first thought was sailboats tip over.
16 This thing didn't -- it was much bigger than a sailboat and
17 didn't have a keel. And somehow I figured out it was the Ethan
18 Allen. But whether I could see the name or how I knew what it
19 was, but I said to my wife, I said -- holy shit. I said that's
20 the Ethan Allen. It's upside down. I said call 911. And her
21 cell phone says 2:54 when she made the call. There's no record
22 with the county. I don't know -- she wasn't that great. I
23 said call 911, Ethan Allen capsized, Cramer Point. She called
24 up. She was kind of in panic mode and kind of we wanted to go
25 out there, so she hung up on the guy. Boat was still tied up

1 at the point, at that point, so I said let's go, and they
2 couldn't get the back rope untied because it was tied tight and
3 panicked and it's a process to get it, you -- step-by-step. So
4 she was undoing from the (indiscernible). So I said what the
5 fuck. I jumped out the boat, undid the front rope and we went
6 out there. In the process we were untying the boat, the Ethan
7 Allen was facing north, and I can't say that how long it was
8 turned over when I saw it, but when we walked out down at the
9 dock everything was fine. So some point when we were -- walked
10 down from the time we started, I started to boat, then I
11 glanced out and there it is upside down. So it couldn't have
12 been more than a minute, 30 seconds that -- it would have
13 been -- trying to hurry to get ourselves out there. The
14 engine -- I've heard other people say the same thing, the
15 engine raced, that the smoke was white and turned dark and went
16 poom (ph.), the smoke stopped.

17 Q. You heard -- the noise backfire? Was that the noise?

18 A. More like the engine just blew. Not a huge
19 explosion, but the engine went bang. That was the end of the
20 engine. And not a huge amount of smoke. It cleared, it
21 cleared pretty quick. It didn't really -- because the, the
22 exhaust was -- blowing it up into the air. It wasn't settling.
23 It just was being forced out. I knew what it was. I knew it
24 was --

25 Q. Right.

1 A. -- exhaust for a boat because the exhaust gets
2 channeled underneath the water so that it doesn't make a lot of
3 noise.

4 Q. And you said that the, the smoke changed color? It
5 was --

6 A. It was -- got darker towards the end.

7 Q. Okay. Now, when you first went down to the boat
8 before you saw the Ethan Allen, what was the water condition?
9 What was the harbor condition at the time?

10 A. Beautiful. That's why we were going out.

11 Q. Was your, was your boat -- when you were preparing
12 your, your small craft there, was it rocking around the dock at
13 all?

14 A. No. We were getting on and off like there was
15 nothing -- in fact there was a small boy, my friend, my son's
16 friend who is the same age as -- eight, and he was on the back
17 of the boat. We have just a short swim platform about that --
18 he was on the back of the boat taking the cover off, and I, I
19 said, Shane, I don't want you to do that. I don't want you to
20 fall in. So if there was much of a wake, I think he would have
21 been in the water, but he didn't fall, was no problem.

22 Q. How long was it by the time you got to the boat to
23 the time you actually saw the Ethan Allen upside down?

24 A. The time we --

25 Q. The first, when you first got down to the

1 (indiscernible) boat until you saw the Ethan Allen --

2 A. started the boat, took the life preservers, 3
3 minutes, maybe 3 to 5 minutes possibly.

4 Q. So roughly at 1450, 14 -- somewhere between that time
5 frame?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. You were preparing the boat. Now how, how protected
8 of an area is that where you are?

9 A. Where my boat is or my sister's house?

10 Q. Where your sister's house is.

11 A. It -- the docks rarely get any wake in there unless
12 it's from a boat going by. The wind between the point here and
13 the way they're tucked down in there, we rarely get any wake
14 from wind, if any. The worst it ever gets is Thursday nights
15 during the fireworks.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. It can get pretty rocky in there that time of --

18 Q. Do you ever in the, in the area where the boat is
19 tied up, do you ever experience wake from boats passing by?

20 A. Uh-huh.

21 Q. And it's most pronounced you said on Thursday nights?

22 A. Because there's a lot of them, you know, one after
23 another. And also I think -- because I go to the fireworks on
24 Thursday nights. It's dark. People are not really planing off
25 and they're drawing a big wake and when I come back from the

1 fireworks, it's tricky to get in there because all the wakes
2 are just rolling in. Most of the traffic stays out here.

3 Q. Sure.

4 A. But by the time it finds its way into here, it's not
5 that bad, although I'm not -- I'm only there when I'm using the
6 boat. I don't know what it's like --

7 Q. Sure.

8 A. -- round the clock.

9 Q. Have you ever observed the Mohican go by from you
10 sister's place where your boat is tied up?

11 A. Uh-huh.

12 Q. And --

13 A. I see them all go by, they all go by.

14 Q. And when they, when they go by, is there ever an
15 opportunity for you to observe their wake from your sister's
16 place where the boat is kept?

17 A. Mohican doesn't come in that close to the -- the
18 Minne comes in that close, and the Shoreline, the Ethan Allen
19 and the de Champlain. Is there another one?

20 Q. Algonquin.

21 A. Algonquin, right, they come in fairly close, but the
22 Mohican doesn't really come into the Bay like the other ones
23 do.

24 Q. And how far from --

25 A. Then again, I'm not there all the time. They may

1 sometimes vary their course, so I don't know. I don't --

2 Q. How far from your, where you keep your boat there at
3 your sister's place to the Ethan Allen, so you know when you
4 looked out and saw the Ethan Allen, how far away do you --
5 would you estimate your --

6 A. People were saying 700 feet. I was talking to my
7 brother-in-law because we play golf so we measure everything.
8 That would be about a 9 iron, we were saying, so 130 yards and
9 3 is would be 300 like 400 -- 400 feet probably, closer to 400
10 feet to 700. I didn't -- it seemed pretty close. It didn't
11 take long to get out there.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Probably the boat even planed off.

14 Q. Okay. Now you mentioned, you said you saw the green
15 hull, and somehow you figured that was the Ethan Allen. How
16 did you determine it was the Ethan Allen?

17 A. I don't know. I don't know how I -- unless there was
18 still lettering there or I just know that that's the name of
19 the -- probably comes out first in my mind when I see those
20 boats go by because the de Champlain that doesn't really stick
21 in your head that well or the Algonquin that doesn't really
22 stick in -- although I should know that one from
23 (indiscernible) than any of them. The community run the Ethan
24 Allen more often or maybe that name sticks in my head for some
25 reason better than the others, but I just knew it was one of

1 those -- probably I just knew it was one of those three boats
2 judging by the size and shape of the hull and, and the course
3 that it normally takes, and I said, oh, that's the Ethan Allen.

4 Q. When you actually go out on the lake past your
5 sister's place, which vessels to your knowledge, seem to create
6 wave action or wakes to your knowledge? Which -- are there
7 small craft, large vessels?

8 A. They all do.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Some are larger than others.

11 Q. Which ones create more trouble for you as a small
12 boater?

13 A. The bigger the boat, the bigger the wake.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Depending on how their, their -- what do you call it,
16 plane angle is, and they can adjust that. Some of the cruise
17 boats -- not cruise boats but (indiscernible) cruisers have
18 trim pads so they can -- I think they can adjust the angle that
19 they're up like this. Even my boat will come up like this. I
20 know coming back from the fireworks, it throws a big wake.

21 Q. So the smaller cruisers you -- you've seen large
22 waves?

23 A. Even at 22 feet, I have to slow down for -- I don't
24 like to go out on the weekends because when the boat traffic is
25 heavy my boat just gets beat up.

1 Q. Now I want you to think very carefully now just for a
2 moment. While you were getting the boat ready and just before
3 you went out and before you saw the Ethan Allen, can you think
4 if you saw any vessel on the horizon or passing by?

5 A. I didn't. The only boat I saw besides the Ethan
6 Allen was a little boat that was what I thought was the first
7 one on the scene.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And it was -- that's the boat I ended up in at the
10 end of the day when I (indiscernible) them. And I don't even
11 know that guy's name. Never saw him before, and hopefully I'll
12 get to see him again some day but --

13 Q. So it was a small, a small boat the first one on the
14 scene, it was a responder?

15 A. Right. I, I just saw the Ethan Allen upside down and
16 then this -- a boat coming as far as I can recall from the
17 south to the scene of the accident.

18 Q. Uh-huh, and you say you ended up on this boat later
19 in the day. So you told your wife to call 911 and you
20 (indiscernible) the boat going off the 400 feet to the east now
21 and what did you do then?

22 A. We pulled up to the scene and it was much worse than
23 I thought, you know. When that boat went over I thought --
24 first I thought, oh, that's, that's odd, then I thought -- I
25 didn't comprehend that was going to be -- I didn't anticipate

1 the scene that I was about to pull up on with people in the
2 water. But anyway, we pulled up alongside, and there was a
3 younger woman up on the hull scampering, screaming for help.
4 The seniors were clinging to the side of the hull, but they
5 were all calm. They had that look of helpless sheep on their
6 face, but they were all calm. There was a man in the water, a
7 passenger, in serious trouble. He was going up kind of in that
8 hands are up like bobbing up and down. And the Good Samaritan
9 I don't know what the name is (indiscernible) I think the first
10 one on the scene, he was trying to keep this guy up. So he
11 threw a few things in the water and it was obvious this guy --
12 two guys might go down, the Good Samaritan and the passenger.
13 So I took my sunglasses off, threw my cell phone off and jumped
14 in to try to help this man help that other guy.

15 Q. And who else was on the boat with you when this
16 occurred?

17 A. My wife, Gisela.

18 Q. And she told you that she had called 911. Was that
19 from the house phone or cell phone?

20 A. That was from the cell phone at the dock.

21 Q. So at that point you knew that 911 had been called
22 and --

23 A. Uh-huh.

24 Q. Okay. So the one passenger that the older gentleman
25 was in trouble and you threw some things in. You jumped into

1 the water. What happened next?

2 A. We -- I helped tried to hold him up with the other
3 man in the water, but I should have put a life vest on first
4 place. It's not easy trying to hold somebody up while trying
5 to hold yourself up at the same time.

6 Q. Sure.

7 A. So eventually we got him over to his boat. It was a
8 small boat. And my wife threw me -- I yelled to my wife to
9 throw me a rope so that we could get it around this guy to tow
10 him, you know, try to think of things to do when you're in the
11 water.

12 Q. Sure.

13 A. And trying not to drown.

14 Q. Sure.

15 A. She threw me a rope about this long. So I said no I
16 need it a little bigger. So we got, eventually got him on the
17 side of the boat. It took all my remaining strength to get
18 into this guy's boat. I was happy to get into that boat once I
19 was in there. Fortunately like I said it was a small boat and
20 wasn't high off the water so I could get over the side and then
21 I didn't have to, you know, swim around to the platform. I
22 managed to get in on the bow side of the boat because it was
23 just a small boat. And had the rope under his armpits to keep,
24 try to keep him out of the water, and it's just all diesel
25 fuel. You tried to pull him by his arms, you couldn't pull him

1 out, and he was a big man. I don't know how much he weighed
2 but much more than me or the other guy. So eventually we -- a
3 third, a third guy came from another boat and the three of us
4 got him in the boat.

5 Q. Uh-huh. Do you know what happened to that passenger?

6 A. The passenger?

7 Q. The victim?

8 A. Oh, yeah, he didn't make it.

9 Q. Didn't.

10 A. Earl. I found out his name was Earl Howlig (ph.).

11 Q. And so once you got the person or passenger onboard,
12 what did you do next? Now this is the first responder vessel.
13 The three of you managed to get this person onboard. What
14 happened next?

15 A. Tried mouth-to-mouth, CPR, you know. It was
16 difficult. It's a small boat, big man. He's covered with
17 diesel fuel. I'm not a professional, and we did the best we
18 could.

19 Q. Sure.

20 A. And I can look at myself in the mirror knowing that I
21 did the best I could and he didn't make it. What are you going
22 to do?

23 Q. By chance did anyone on the boat know to your
24 knowledge CPR? Have you been trained in CPR?

25 A. I was in the Air Force.

1 Q. Years ago?

2 A. Years ago. But once again, we were in a classroom
3 working on a flat, dry floor with a -- Resuscitation Annie we
4 used to call her, and it wasn't you know much more different
5 than being in a field. This is not a boat, so, you know. I, I
6 recall the, the basics you know, but under the circumstances.
7 It probably wasn't that. It was too late for him anyway. He
8 probably -- it was probably too late, but I -- you see on TV.
9 they, you know, they manage miracles on television, but we
10 weren't managing any miracles in that boat that day.

11 Q. At any time of this was he -- did he lose
12 consciousness while you were trying to get him in the boat do
13 you think or --

14 A. He was --

15 Q. -- at what point --

16 A. -- when I got into the water, he -- I don't even know
17 if he was conscious. He, he looked -- like I said, he looked
18 like his hands were up in the air and he was bobbing up and
19 down. I think that's the last stages, but --

20 Q. Sure.

21 A. -- his color -- he had some bluish in here, but his
22 color didn't look that bad.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Not compared to some of the other ones I saw later.

25 Q. Was the boat, was the, was the lake cold in your

1 opinion? You've been on the lake quite a bit.

2 A. You know, I wasn't planning on going swimming that
3 day, but it didn't feel bad at all to me. It never registered
4 that -- never once did I think to myself, oh, man, I'm cold. I
5 never felt cold. I actually had a shirt on just like this. I
6 went in the water with the shirt on. But fortunately this
7 doesn't really hold water, otherwise that would have been
8 another mistake that I made.

9 Q. All right. So once you were doing CPR and then, then
10 the boat driver -- what did you guys do?

11 A. We actually on another boat, I knew these people that
12 was Mounir Rahal and his family. Their daughter knew CPR. So
13 we were looking for anybody that knew. Actually I was looking
14 for more like a paramedic or something, not a 12-year-old kid
15 that took CPR in health class. I -- so they -- I don't know
16 how she got on the boat. They must have backed over because
17 she wasn't wet. They must have backed over and dropped her
18 off, but she, she said she couldn't, she said she couldn't get
19 down to where she could do it, which was in fact, it just
20 wasn't pleasant.

21 Q. Sure.

22 A. I mean he had vomit in his mouth. I was dry heaving
23 over the side. He had -- pulled dentures out. I mean it
24 was -- nobody wanted to put their mouth on this guy's mouth, so
25 I said, what the fuck, I'll do it, because, you know, somebody

1 had to do it.

2 Q. Sure, sure. And was this passenger or the victim
3 transferred ashore? Did you get on shore?

4 A. Yeah, actually then I recognized Paul Livingston was
5 out there. He's with the fire department. I said Paul, we
6 have a guy, you know, all this time in my mind I thought he was
7 the only one drowning. I didn't know there was any -- because
8 when we pulled up we saw those people on the side, I -- well,
9 actually when I was in the water with this guy Earl, I could
10 hear them on the inside of the boat knocking, crying for help.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And at that time I didn't know that the boat was
13 going to sink, and it seemed like it was going to stay there
14 for a while. It did stay there for quite awhile upside down.

15 Q. Can you describe that noise? I mean what you heard a
16 little bit more in detail?

17 A. Just knocking and help.

18 Q. You heard, you heard, you actually heard words saying
19 help?

20 A. Yes. And then the passengers, some of the passengers
21 clinging to the side of the boat said there's people under the
22 boat, and all I'm thinking is I got -- what happened when I
23 first went down with this guy Earl this woman who was in the
24 water looked at me and said that's my husband. So I think what
25 happened is I felt obligated to stick with this guy because she

1 looked at me right and said that's my husband, and then I think
2 that I just said okay this is the man I've got to save.

3 Q. Sure, sure.

4 A. You know everybody else has got to find somebody else
5 to save them. I can only try to save one at a time.

6 Q. Uh-huh. So you recognized Paul Livingston and he was
7 on another boat?

8 A. Sheriff, you know, Lake George boat, the red boat
9 that they use.

10 Q. Lake George boat.

11 A. What it says on it was -- it's an official -- it's a
12 rescue.

13 Q. Right.

14 A. Rescue boat.

15 Q. Okay. And they took the victim off the boat?

16 A. No. He said take him to shore, take him to shore.
17 So at this time we had the victim, myself, the owner of the
18 boat, the woman that was with the owner, the girl that was
19 going to perform CPR and some other man that came and drove the
20 boat for us.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. In this small boat. The owner was going take it
23 easy. We're heavily overloaded here. So Earl was the first
24 one to shore. Earl was the first victim to shore. So I
25 thought, good, we got this guy to shore. If he has any chance

1 to live, these people have all the equipment, the knowledge,
2 they maybe can fix this guy. When we pulled him up to shore
3 and I walked back out the dock and then another ship
4 (indiscernible) pulled in, says we got two here full arrest.
5 So I helped carry them in, and by the time I got to the other
6 end of the dock, they had the sheet over Earl and carried --
7 went back and carried another one in. They were all heavy,
8 heavy -- later I, I just thought they were obese, but it's a
9 combination, filled with water too from being drowned, I guess.
10 Woman fell off the stretcher. It was, it was --

11 Q. Where did you take them ashore?

12 A. At that triage center there at 9 o'clock. It was
13 where the boathouse is there. Where all the ambulances were
14 set up, and they had it blocked off there.

15 Q. Can you just show me on the chart here and roughly
16 describe where that was? Not to mark on it, just --

17 A. Oh, on this one --

18 Q. Where is that at this point here?

19 A. That's out on the point, isn't it?

20 Q. Right. What's the name of this point here?

21 A. This is called --

22 Q. (indiscernible) Point.

23 A. My sister is probably -- this is probably where
24 the -- where the dock was where they brought people.

25 Q. Okay. So from the time you saw the boat it was at

1 2:54, and you -- it took you less than a minute to get to the
2 boat you figure?

3 A. By the time we had it all untied, it was probably 3
4 o'clock. By the time we got untied, in, in probably three
5 minutes.

6 Q. So looking at --

7 A. It probably took --

8 Q. Just before 3 o'clock? So at 57ish on the scene?

9 A. Yes. Something like that. If my -- the cell phone
10 is right, said 2:54 on my wife's cell phone.

11 Q. Okay. So just shortly before 3 o'clock. And do you
12 recall what time you got to the triage center?

13 A. No.

14 Q. When you were --

15 A. No. When I tried to piece it back together when I
16 got back to my sister's dock, in all total I think we were out
17 there for about 45 minutes.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Because trying to figure out when my sister got home
20 and then when we got back over there from 3 o'clock, we were
21 involved with this for about 45 minutes.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And I have no concept of how -- because it seemed,
24 you know, it's hard to figure out, playing it back in my mind
25 45 minutes. I must be missing a few pages in there.

1 Q. Sure, sure. So did you have a chance to see -- you
2 were out there fairly quickly yourself and another boat, and
3 can you describe the other rescuers and their efforts, Lake
4 George or the Sheriff's Department?

5 A. Well, they would have been -- Rahal family, they have
6 a rather large boat. There was some -- there was a family in a
7 good-sized boat, and he said that he could help, but his wife
8 couldn't drive the boat, so he wanted somebody to come over and
9 drive the boat while he got in and helped, and I, I'm thinking
10 to myself, I'm not getting back in the water. I was spent, you
11 know. If I tried to swim over to his boat, I might not have --
12 you know, I was just exhausted from trying to get this guy in
13 the boat. So he ended up jumping in and swimming over and
14 he -- it was another couple had a (indiscernible) white with a
15 blue stripe, guy with gray hair, but I think he asked them to,
16 you know, make sure his boat didn't run ashore. And I saw a
17 guy in a kayak kind of scooting around the action in the middle
18 of it trying to keep things from banging, people getting hurt
19 in the rescue effort. And the, the rescue boat. Paul
20 Livingston was on there.

21 Q. And the rescue boat was seen roughly in minutes?

22 A. You know the time -- I was focused on this one
23 individual doing CPR and, and just focused on him, and I really
24 wasn't aware what was going around me that much.

25 Q. Sure.

1 A. Just (indiscernible) and like I said, I never
2 thought -- I didn't realize he was not the only one drowning.
3 I thought he was the only one.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. The whole time until I -- like I said until we got
6 back to shore, and I -- that's when the casualties started to
7 roll in.

8 Q. Okay. And I guess the last question I have is while
9 you were proceeding to the triage, the -- were the first
10 responders there already?

11 A. Meaning?

12 Q. Fire, rescue --

13 A. Yeah, they were there. I saw Bruce Kilburn on the
14 dock. There was ambulances there. They were, yes. Tommy,
15 Tommy McKinney (ph.) was -- the dive people were just coming
16 out on the dock and Tommy McKinney's eyes were like this. I've
17 never seen his eyes so big, plus his glasses were off, and I,
18 you know, you could tell he was, he was in for an experience, I
19 guess.

20 Q. And, you know, just a rough estimate there of the
21 assets that you saw at the triage station, just, you know,
22 fire, medical, two trucks, three trucks?

23 A. I saw two women working on Early.

24 Q. Uh-huh.

25 A. And there were -- I think it was mostly Lake George

1 people that I, I'm going to say maybe 2, 3 maybe at the most.

2 Q. Three.

3 A. Three. And --

4 Q. (indiscernible) okay.

5 A. Mostly it was all, looked like familiar, somewhat
6 familiar faces.

7 Q. Uh-huh.

8 A. So.

9 Q. Are those ambulances, those volunteer groups or those
10 professional on-duty ambulances? Do you -- are you familiar
11 with --

12 A. We have a volunteer.

13 Q. Volunteer. Did your wife mention what the 911
14 operator, what they said on the phone?

15 A. Well, she was kind of pissed, you know, they, they
16 have (indiscernible) they have a routine. May I have your name
17 and address? She wasn't in the mood to give them her name and
18 address.

19 Q. Certainly.

20 A. She gave her name, but she didn't want to take the
21 time to give her address, unfortunately didn't even give the
22 address to the accident scene either, I don't think, but she --
23 they have a standard stay calm, stick to the program method,
24 and that's about what she said.

25 Q. Did the 911 operator give any instructions to your

1 wife to pass on at all?

2 A. She hung up on them actually.

3 Q. Okay.

4 MR. TURRELL: I'll go ahead and turn it over to Walt.

5 BY SGT. SCHEDEL:

6 Q. I don't really have a lot of questions for you, but
7 you did mention some other names, and -- when we're done with
8 this, we'll see if we can get some more information on this.
9 We may like to try and contact some of those other people.

10 A. All right.

11 Q. Your wife stayed aboard your boat the whole time --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. -- she stayed in the bay or did she take the boat
14 back to shore or what?

15 A. She took the boat back to shore.

16 Q. Okay, but did she do that after you got off or did
17 she hang out in the area for awhile first or --

18 A. I -- well, Earl, and then, and then I helped load,
19 unload three or four more victims, and then I saw her coming
20 in, and then I walked from where the triage center was. She
21 dropped off her passengers at another dock nearby there, and so
22 I saw her coming, I walked over there.

23 Q. Did your wife also pick victims up out of the water?

24 A. She only picked up survivors.

25 Q. Survivors. Well, they're still victims.

1 A. Oh, okay.

2 Q. Do you recall how many she picked up?

3 A. Eight (indiscernible) watch TV., she was on every
4 channel.

5 Q. We'll call them survivors, eight survivors.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. So they managed to get up in your boat under their
8 own power?

9 A. No.

10 Q. No.

11 A. She had to help them. Because she had the same
12 issues because of the diesel. She had -- grabbed them by the
13 seat of their pants and (indiscernible) there's a short swim
14 platform on our boat, not much. May even call it a platform.
15 It's just like a --

16 Q. Wooden --

17 A. -- area. It's not wooden. It's (indiscernible)
18 yeah. And there's a ladder that drops down. She dropped the
19 ladder down, but people did the best they could getting up on
20 it. She was able to maneuver a little close to the boat, and
21 she threw a rope out and one of them pulled the boat closer
22 because she said that they were afraid to let go of the boat
23 long enough to swim from (indiscernible) because they might not
24 make it. She almost had to get right on top of them before
25 they could get in the boat.

1 Q. Okay. Wow. Is your wife used to handling the boat?

2 A. No. She doesn't like to handle the boat, but she --
3 I'm proud of her. She did a great job.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, she did. There's eight
5 survivors that would have otherwise been victims probably.

6 MR. ROOT: Possibly, but you never know. Someone
7 else could have helped out too. I don't know, but yeah, she,
8 she -- it's starting to sink into her a little bit now I think.
9 My wife has a -- she has a good chapter of this book to tell.
10 She told it to, to just about everybody. She has a good
11 chapter. I don't like telling it.

12 MR. TURRELL: I understand. I think that we'll
13 probably be contacting her. I'm not sure if Marietta called
14 her yet or not, but I will either do it myself or Mariette
15 Burer, another NTSB investigator. She does the survival
16 factors. And she may ask to take a statement. I'm sure she
17 will. It will be (indiscernible) from Mariette's group.

18 BY MR. TURRELL:

19 Q. So I'll have her call you to get a hold of your wife
20 about her --

21 A. Same number.

22 Q. Sure.

23 A. Or I can -- yeah, you can set up an appointment with
24 her.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. I'll have her call you, if you want.

2 Q. Yeah, we can do that.

3 A. -- numbers where I could call. In fact that one was
4 a 75 -- (indiscernible).

5 Q. That's what I'm saying. It's probably easier just
6 for us to call her and --

7 A. Probably still have the number. It was a
8 (indiscernible) didn't have to use the Area Code.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Code 701?

10 MR. ROOT: Yes.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's a cell phone, that's a
12 local number.

13 MR. ROOT: That's you then. I thought it was
14 Marshall somebody?

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. Probably just didn't come
16 out well on the tape.

17 MR. TURRELL: Okay, and Sean, questions?

18 MR. QUIRK: Sean.

19 BY MR. QUIRK:

20 Q. You brought Earl in and, and the paramedics were
21 there, divers were there, and was that would you say in the
22 beginning of your experience of 45 minutes that you were there
23 or middle or the end, the last portion?

24 A. The last 10 minutes because we brought Earl in, and I
25 helped unload a few victims because two people couldn't handle

1 it. It took four people on -- and slippery conditions, you
2 know, whatever, a narrow dock. So (indiscernible) had the
3 manpower, I, I (indiscernible) yeah, I saw her coming across
4 the bay.

5 Q. (indiscernible) the loading of your boat, do you
6 recall seeing the Ethan Allen afloat and --

7 A. I may have, but it's not --

8 Q. Because it wouldn't register.

9 A. Yeah, it's one of those part of the scenery
10 background things, but actually from where we -- from here, I
11 mean it doesn't take long for it to come around the point and
12 get right in the middle of my sister's in that bay, so the time
13 it takes me to walk down, load the boat, start it, it could
14 have been well around the -- on the other side of the point.

15 Q. (indiscernible)

16 A. Yeah.

17 BY MR. TURRELL:

18 Q. I just have one other question. In that vicinity
19 where the Ethan Allen was overturned in that general bay, are
20 you aware of any shallow areas or any obstructions or problems
21 on the bottom there at all?

22 A. No. Just closer to shore, way closer to shore, right
23 out in front of that house that there's a spire (ph.)
24 (indiscernible) a little bit of a --

25 Q. That's much closer --

1 A. Yes, yes.

2 MR. TURRELL: Okay. I think we'll go off the record
3 here for any other questions for the --

4 SGT. SCHEDEL: Just one more.

5 MR. TURRELL: Walter, go ahead.

6 SGT. SCHEDEL: Walt Schedel.

7 BY SGT. SCHEDEL:

8 Q. You mentioned that you didn't think the boat would go
9 down right away and -- let me see, I wrote it down, but it
10 seems like you said that it stayed capsized for quite awhile
11 before it actually did go down. Can you give me a rough idea
12 how long you thought it might have actually stayed on the
13 surface?

14 A. Well, when we brought Earl in the boat was -- as far
15 as I can recall, the boat was still floating upside -- albeit
16 upside down. It wasn't until I was back onshore and with my
17 wife when I looked out and the boat was gone.

18 Q. Actually gone.

19 A. I think that's when the victims really started to add
20 up because probably those people that were trapped in probably
21 never got out and the boat went down.

22 SGT. SCHEDEL: Thank you.

23 MR. TURRELL: Okay, if you would just acknowledge,
24 John, this is recorded, and we'll end the, end the interview.

25 MR. ROOT: Okay. I acknowledge that this is recorded

1 and we'll end the interview.

2 MR. TURRELL: Thanks.

3 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled
4 matter was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: Investigation of MV Ethan Allen
 Lake George, New York
 October 2, 2005
 Interview of John Root

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA 06 MM 001

PLACE: Lake George, New York

DATE: October 6, 2005

was held according to the record, and that this is the
original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been
compared to the recording accomplished at the hearing.

Katherine Motley
Transcriber